

Seattle City Council

Culture, Civil Rights, Health, and Personnel Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 2:00 PM, May 14th, 2008

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **John Burgess**

Today's poet is **Lynn Miller**

Lynn Miller is a librarian at the Ballard Branch Library of the Seattle Public Library. Two things she loves best about her job: first that the Ballard Library staff loves and promotes the arts. They and she can encourage the love of poetry in large and small ways in their work every day. Second, that by design the public library draws everyone in. Eventually all of the unique and interesting people in our city will find their way into the library. People keep her work infinitely interesting.

Teresa Papandreau

by Lynn Miller

Teresa, when I heard you were dead
I bought pink tulips at Ballard Market
on the way home from the library
and stopped at your house
where your shopping cart was still
parked under the car port.

I flung the tulips over your gate;
they landed on the steps.
“Good-bye Teresa Papandreau,” I said.

It was in the wee hours of grocery shopping
at Ballard Market
that I first observed you
clad in black from head to toe
leaning on your shopping cart
nursing a Dixie cup of complimentary coffee
squinting through thick glasses
from under a black hood.

A Strega Nona come to life
in the brightly lit aisles.

I was always hurrying out to grab a few things and get home
but you were never in any hurry
leisurely strolling and sipping.

Then I began to notice you everywhere
as you made your rounds
always walking in the street never on the sidewalk.

Black in summer
black in winter
you were like a brave and lonely wasp
your skirts brushing through the garden gate
brushing the pavement
nosing your shopping cart down 8th toward Fred Meyer
for a sale on 10 lbs of flour
expecting traffic to part for you,
our yaya.

Some of us have been given more
than we can contain of happiness
and I always thought you took our measure of sorrow
and more sorrow.
Teresa Papandrea
husband gone,
money in tiny supply
You were a puddle of black
in this neighborhood of well-to-do-ness.

Teresa Papandrea
once of Greece
we will lay tulips and spring flowers
on your walk.
We will pause beside the gardens you
cordoned off with caution tape.

We will take your black skirts and cape
and hoist them high over Seattle
sail them back to Greece to your village
console ourselves for our loss of this woman
who made her way and grew old in our village

without phone, without electricity.
without a car and without English

without without without

without and yet *with something*
that is life,

that keeps itself going.

It is now we who are without you,
Teresa Papandreau.

-- *end* --